

Y-12's Training and Technology – TAT and Dave Miller

Dave Miller was discharged from the Navy in 1970. He enrolled in Chattanooga State Technical College because it was the only school around that offered a program in Non-Destructive Testing (NDT), a developing new career field that was being used in the growing nuclear power plant construction industry and Dave wanted to get a job in that industry.

He soon realized that he was the *only* person who had signed up for the NDT program, and the courses directly related to that program would not be taught that semester. So, Dave took some general courses and waited for a second semester, hoping NDT would be included then. Not so, the same situation existed the next semester, Dave was the only person who wanted those courses. So, he came home to Oak Ridge.

Not long after arriving back in Oak Ridge, Dave visited a local billiard parlor and started a conversation with the new owner Herman Wyrick. Herman was also a welding instructor in a new program called Training and Technology (TAT) and NDT was taught there. Dave completed the necessary forms, but was told he did not qualify for TAT.

However, after further consideration, Dave was accepted, not into the NDT program (it was full), but in the welding program. This did not work well for him though. Welding was not something he enjoyed, especially the parts about burning holes in his clothes and the blisters that formed on his skin beneath the holes in his clothes.

Dave continued to seek acceptance into the NDT program, and when one of the trainees had to leave to return to Chicago, he was offered that opening. There was one catch: he was three months behind in a six-month program!

He was told that by moving from welding to NDT he could very well end up with neither a welding certificate nor an NDT certificate. Dave assured him he could catch up. "He said I could swap classrooms under one condition. I said, 'Anything!' He said, 'Get a haircut.' The next Monday morning with my new haircut, I showed up in class."

Dave continued his NDT training story, "As it turned out, the three months of welding was a perfect fit for NDT because I already knew how these artifacts came to be in these welds. I had put many of them there myself. I got caught up very quickly and soon was at or near the top of the class. We were taught the metallurgy of welding, many techniques for testing welds including liquid penetrant inspection, radiography or X-ray. Also ultrasonic testing was taught.

"About a month from graduation, a fellow came down to Y-12 from Toledo, Ohio, and wanted to hire the two best students in the class. I was selected as one of them. I told the advisors that I wanted to find a job a bit closer to home. They told me that there may be no jobs at all. So off I went to Sandusky, Ohio.

"I was hired by ITT Grinnell to be a welding inspector. Wow, my dreams had come true! I was a welding inspector, and they were paying me six bucks an hour on top of that. But not to worry, a raise was promised every three months. I learned fast, and soon was considered the best welding inspector at Davis-Besse Nuclear Power Station.

"Then one day I got a phone call from one of my classmates back at TAT. He said he had seen a hiring list for TVA's Sequoyah Nuclear Power Plant but my name was lined through. He gave me a name to call in personnel. I called and told them that I learned my name was on the hire list at Sequoyah but that it seemed to be lined through. I was told it had been crossed it off when I told them I was not interested in the job. It seems I was the first person called but that I had told them I was happy at ITT. I about fell over. I confronted my boss and he confessed and thought the whole thing was terribly funny.

"I called TVA back and told them I would love to go to work for them. Two weeks later in April of 1974, I was inspecting welds at The Sequoyah Nuclear Plant in Soddy-Daisy. I soon found myself working as the lead inspector. I never looked back."

For Dave, promotions came quickly and soon he had 30 inspectors under his supervision. He had gone from inspector to lead inspector to Quality Control Manager and helped build two Nuclear Power Plants for TVA, both Sequoyah and Watts Bar. Twenty eight years later Dave retired from TVA and came back home to Oak Ridge.

Dave Miller may have been the only student to receive training in two different disciplines at TAT, Welding and Non Destructive Testing, not graduate from either one of them, yet to be hired because of the knowledge gained there. His career was successful primarily because he learned quickly and applied the TAT experience quickly and consistently.

The welds in the piping system of a nuclear power plant are some of the most critical elements assuring the safety and success of these plants. These nuclear power plants provide a large portion of the power generated by TVA.

Dave's long and successful career at TVA allowed him to proudly serve to assure these welds were of the highest quality. He got his start with the training he received at TAT!